



semipalmated sandpiper

Calidris pusilla

Kingdom: Animalia
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates
Class: Aves
Order: Charadriiformes
Family: Scolopacidae

Characteristics

An adult semipalmated sandpiper is 5 1/2 to 6 1/2 inches long. Both sexes are similar in appearance. The body is gray with some white coloring. This sandpiper has a dark body coloring in the summer and has more white on its body during the winter. Its short, wide bill and legs are black. The toes are partially webbed to help it move in its aquatic habitat.

Natural History

The semipalmated sandpiper winters from Florida south to Argentina and Chile. It lives on beaches, mudflats, and other open, wet areas. This bird eats mainly insects and mollusks (snails, clams). Its call is "cherk" or "cheh." The birds may be seen migrating through Iowa in April or May as they go to their breeding grounds in the arctic. This common migrant tends to be a late spring and fall migrant.

Habitats

constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs; interior rivers and streams; temporary water supplies; natural lakes and prairie marshes

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

migrant: statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.